"MOTIONLESS AS AN IDOL":
THE ROLES OF ART, MODERNISM, AND RELIGION
IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

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"Motionless as an Idol":

The Roles of Art, Modernism, and Religion

in William Faulkner's Construction of Gender

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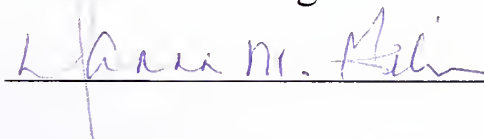Committee Member

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Introduction

William Faulkner's body of work addresses many specific issues and conditions specific to the South, but this project focuses on the place of Southern women in society and Faulkner's exploration of their subjugation through the language and images of art. I will analyze three of his texts: "A Rose for Emily," *As I Lay Dying,* and *The Sound and the Fury* with a particular focus on the main female characters and the art metaphors they are presented in association with and, often, as encapsulated within. I chose these three texts because they are best representative of my argument. In the texts, Faulkner uses art metaphors and technical artistic methods to create women through whom he criticizes his society. Art metaphors are an effective way to show the societal construction of the female identity and role while revealing just how destructive and life-restricting those constructions are. Miss Emily is portrayed using very detailed metaphors, articulating the depths of her society's expectations and injustice. Addie Bundren is depicted through a few art metaphors, with the extended metaphor being that of her coffin, disclosing her subjectification. Caddy Compson is also related to art metaphors that render her in the same manner as the two other women, struggling against the male domination that threatens her existence and relegates her identities to what is deemed acceptable. Faulkner exposes his own bias towards the women and their independence through his creation of them; he does not make caricatures of them or restrict them in the ways their societies do. Instead, he illustrates the richness of their personalities in hopes to show what has been lost as a result of their subjugation. I argue that Faulkner's purpose extends beyond forging sympathy for the women; his purpose seeks to prevent future losses like those he depicts and offers corrective guidance for his Southern community.

I seek to establish my argument as an original contribution to a continuing scholarly conversation about Faulkner and his place within his society and the significance of his literary contributions. Many scholars have examined both Faulkner's use of gender and his interest in art, but my approach combines the two in a way that has not previously been explored in Faulkner scholarship. I also analyze the effects of Modernism and Southern community, with its emphasis on religion, in Faulkner's work, seeking to understand and communicate a broader picture of his relevance and significance.

However, any discussion of Faulkner's work without mention of its inherent Southern context is incomplete. The specific conversation in which this project participates concerns the Southern idealization and restriction of gender. Commenting on Faulkner's Southern heritage Diane Roberts says, "As a southerner, Faulkner inherited the images, icons, and demons of his culture. They are part of the matter of the region with which he engages, sometimes accepting, sometimes rejecting" (Roberts xi). Faulkner experienced the South's limited molding of masculinity in his own life and understood its casting of femininity through both his own perspectives on it and his relationships with women, and this project will address whether or not he chose to accept or reject his society's perspective on women. Joe Williamson reminds us of the severity of gender politics within the South: "The relishing… of the idea of men as chivalrous knights and women as castellated ladies was not merely coincidental, nor was it frivolous […], [o]n the contrary it was immanent and deadly serious" (26). Faulkner intuits the "deadly" seriousness to which Williamson refers and places it firmly within each of the

texts presented here in specific instances related to women that I do not believe are merely hyperbolic.

In analyzing the metaphors of art through which Faulkner's female characters are shown in their respective stories, there is value in looking at the perspectives Faulkner developed concerning art. Randall Wilhelm says, "William Faulkner first published not a poem nor a piece of fiction, but a pen and ink drawing. In fact, Faulkner's initial impulses in the arts were as much visual as literary [...]" (27). Faulkner made many drawings and illustrations, sometimes to accompany his own written work. Faulkner began to use visual art in a novel way to inform his own written work:

> For unlike Gertrude Stein and Hemingway, who were primarily connoisseurs and collectors, Faulkner's involvement with the arts was of an active nature – was the expression of what was actually a multiple creativity. Almost as early as Faulkner could write stories and poems, he began to draw and sketch. (Lind 127)

Faulkner's mother "continued to encourage him with his drawing and painting" (Blotner 39) even at a very young age. Faulkner knew that his artistic abilities pleased his mother and would appeal to that throughout his life by sharing his work with her (Singal 59). Perhaps one reason Faulkner's artistry pleased his mother is because his maternal grandmother, Lelia Butler, was also an artist and had won a scholarship in 1890 to study sculpture in Rome but passed it up to care for her daughter (Blotner 12). Faulkner's grandmother was his first introduction to art; "Damuddy," as the boys called her, lived with the family when Faulkner was young and is remembered spending "a good deal of time at the easel" (Blotner 12). Faulkner's interest in art continued as he matured and he

wrote about the artists whom he admired most and "mainly drew on the artistic tradition of the impressionist and post-impressionist eras" (Hönnighausen 559). Faulkner appreciated several painters, Degas, Manet, and Chavannes, but he was particularly influenced by the Post-Impressionistic painters, such as Picasso, Matisse, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Cézanne (Blotner 160). I will examine Cézanne's influence on Faulkner in detail later in the discussion of "A Rose for Emily."

There is a subtle dialogue present in each of the texts I will analyze here that converses with these Modernist painters by whom Faulkner was so struck. I will examine the distinct elements that compose Faulkner's response to his culture's artistic conversation in conjunction with the texts in which they appear. However, the dialogue to which I refer is more complex than it may initially appear. Examining Faulkner's work through the contexts of Modernist art and his commentary on women introduces the significant question of why he even includes art as a significant theme in his work and also, why he casts his cultural criticisms within metaphors. My analysis seeks to answer both of these questions, illustrating the parallels between Faulkner's artistic interests and his own intentions in creating art using metaphor.

Just as any discussion of Faulkner would be incomplete without the Southern elements, so it is with the influences and effects of Modernism. Stephen Spender talks about Modernism and how it changed from preceding traditions: "[…] the principle of reality in our time is peculiarly difficult to grasp, and that 'realism' is not an adequate approach to it" (qtd. in Peter Faulkner 15). Faulkner is creating art out of the same societal context as the artists who influenced him. Therefore, it is natural that there are similarities in the content and form of their work, and these similarities will be analyzed

in detail later. In the same way Faulkner was participating in a (visually) artistic conversation, he was also textually joining the ancient literary tradition of ekphrasis. Ekphrasis is the representation of visual art, art pieces, or visual scenes in traditionally poetic form, but also in prose. Ekphrasis allows for reflection not only on individual pieces of art, as in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" but also for reflection on the differences between art and life. Faulkner used this tradition to his advantage, adapting it to his Modernist sensibilities by using ekphrasis as a way to allow the reader a tool that can be utilized to examine the layers of reality as portrayed through art. This becomes particularly poignant when considering the circumstances of Faulkner's women discussed in this project; ekphrasis allows for the questioning of who is responsible for the construction of reality, society, and its representative art. The use of ekphrasis establishes Faulkner's place in literature's heritage but also allows for questioning his message and his methods.

Faulkner's methodical use of art metaphors evidences his "multiple creativity" through the depth of meaning he conveys through them (Lind 127). Faulkner believed in the power of visual art as imagined through written art, had "a sense that [modernist authors'] writing might recuperate from the abstractness of Victorian prose by attaining some of the concreteness of the arts" (Hönnighausen 560). The metaphors Faulkner employs to explain the consciousness of his society also add a level of concreteness to what could otherwise appear as dismissible abstract ideas and perhaps seems out of place in such stories.

As I Lay Dying and *The Sound and the Fury*

The concrete, gritty details of the metaphors contained in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury* work together to contribute to Faulkner's purpose of revealing the flaws within his community. Faulkner uses metaphors of art in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury* in order to show his reader the restrictions of their societal positions. In *As I Lay Dying* Addie Bundren is watching her son, Cash, labor to construct her coffin. The symbolic implications of the coffin are imperative to understanding Addie. Her husband, Anse, commissioned the coffin saying,

> It was her wish, […] [y]ou got no affection nor gentleness for her. You never had. We would be beholden to no man, […] me and her. We have never yet been, and she will rest quieter for knowing it and that it was her own blood sawed out the boards and drove the nails. She was ever one to clean up after herself. (Faulkner 19)

Any critical reader of the text will realize that Anse is not convincing Cash to make the coffin because it is truly Addie's wish, but because he is a consistently self-absorbed character trying to save as much money as possible in order to be able to buy the things that he wants. In this way, Anse controls Addie, even in her death. The homemade coffin represents a final false construction imposed upon Addie, crafted by her son. It is essential to remember that Addie spends the majority of the novel within the coffin, framed within the final male construction[1]. Although she is allowed enough autonomy to speak for herself in the book, she is still seen by the reader as framed inside a male

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[1] I am indebted to Dr. Josh Eyler for the development of this idea. He suggested that the coffin serves as an artistic frame for Addie Bundren.

creation that is then directed and controlled by men, even posthumously. Susan V. Donaldson puts it this way, "*As I Lay Dying,* […] literally confines Addie Bundren in a much abused coffin and figuratively imprisons her voice within a cacophony of other voices […]" (72). Donaldson diminishes some of the emphasis I place on Addie's personal voice, although she is accurate in pointing out that Addie's voice faces aggressive competition from fifteen other narrators (Pearce 89). Faulkner includes a scene when Cash is making the coffin and Addie watches him from her bedside window:

> [Cash] looks up at the gaunt face framed by the window in the twilight. It is a composite picture of all time since he was a child. He drops the saw and lifts the board for her to see, watching the window in which the face has not moved. He drags a second plank into position and slants the two of them into their final juxtaposition, gesturing toward the ones yet on the ground, shaping with his empty hand in pantomime the finished box. For a while still she looks down at him from the composite picture, neither with censure nor approbation. Then the face disappears. (Faulkner 48)

Cash gestures to show Addie what he is creating, while Addie makes no such movements. Still, Cash is able to see in Addie the "composite picture" Faulkner mentions twice (48). This picture of Addie's face, framed by the window, is imagined by Cash and demonstrates how a child imagines his/her mother but, more importantly, how a man imagines a woman in his life as a reflection of himself and his experience. Cash reads her face because we know he is aware of the lack of "censure or approbation," but he does not apply these to Addie's personality overall. He does not seek to understand or interpret her feelings, he only wants to know the facet of her as it relates directly to him (48).

Another art metaphor Faulkner uses in relation to Addie is that of a bronze casting:

> She looks down at the face. It is like a casting of fading bronze upon the pillow, the hands alone still with any semblance of life: a curled, gnarled inertness; a spent yet alert quality from which weariness, exhaustion, travail has not yet departed [...] (51)

This metaphor expands that of the composite picture with Faulkner reiterating just how much of Addie is the creation of other people. She is never described as vibrant or full of personality. Instead, she is described as weary, burdened, and miserable – living through the role others have assigned her – or, in essence, cast her. Richard Pearce reminds us that "Addie cannot break from society, or even escape her social construction. But she does not give in to it" (95). In this way, Faulkner conveys the continued plight of women as it is passed on from father to son, perpetuated throughout generations.

In *As I Lay Dying,* Faulkner offers a male character who could be seen as representative of the possible changes in the South. Both *As I Lay Dying* and "A Rose for Emily" were published in 1930, so it is probable that Faulkner was considering some of the same issues with each text and providing alternate consequences based on the differing characters and their differing representations of gender. The doctor, Peabody, comes to examine Addie and reads into her expression of resistance to him the plight he has seen in the faces of other women. Peabody describes the scene:

> [Addie] watches me: I can feel her eyes. It's like she was shoving at me with them. I have seen it before in women. Seen them drive from the room them

coming with sympathy and pity, with actual help, and clinging to some trifling

animal to whom they never were more than pack-horses. That's what they mean

by the love that passeth understanding: that pride, that furious desire to hide that

abject nakedness which we bring here with us, carry with us into operating rooms,

carry stubbornly and furiously with us into the earth again. I leave the room. (45-

46)

His sympathy, desire to help, and education separate him from the other male characters.

Peabody's intuition is well developed; he reads into Addie the reason she refuses his aid

and assigns responsibility both to her for her pride and to Anse because of the way he

abuses her. Through Peabody, Faulkner offers a different way to approach women but

demonstrates the unpopularity and unfamiliarity of the concept by Peabody's quick and

ineffective exit. Peabody, without ever verbally articulating his feelings, shows how

unwelcome and different he is by highlighting Addie's reaction alongside Anse's

obliviousness and then escaping the scene as quickly as is appropriate. Faulkner, perhaps

intuitively, or perhaps from experience, acknowledges that adopting an unpopular and

unfamiliar opinion on something as culturally entrenched as the subjugation of women

would be hard to implement and uphold through Peabody's brief appearance.

In *The Sound and the Fury,* Faulkner's use of art metaphors is further diversified

and deepened in meaning. Caddy is the main female character, and she is clearly

portrayed as being dominated by the male authorities in her life, particularly her brother

Jason, but she defies possession in a way Miss Emily and Addie Bundren do not. The

only blatant art metaphor is placed when her brother, Quentin, describes her response to

his question:

> do you love him Caddy
>
> do I what
>
> she looked at me then everything emptied out of her eyes and they looked like the
>
> eyes in statues blank and unseeing and serene […] (163)

It is appropriate that Quentin would be the one to compare Caddy to a statue because it is he who most longs to mold Caddy to his desires. His incestuous longings for her reveal the dangers of the rigid system within which both he and his sister operate – a system in which the appearance of virtue is valued above life. Faulkner is again using art to criticize the system that would force Caddy, his self-proclaimed "heart's darling," to have eyes like a statue, formed by others for the purposes of others outside of herself (*Faulkner in the University* 6). Richard Pearce adds:

> [Faulkner] certainly cared about Caddy. He created a character doomed by her
>
> natural, selfless, and spontaneous love. And he designed a novel to question the
>
> social order that destroyed her. But from the originial conception, Caddy is
>
> identified with her body, sexuality, and death. Her image is so difficult to grasp or
>
> so threatening that her story must be told through four voices – though not one of
>
> them is hers, and all of them, as I will show, are male. (80)

Again, it is important to note the significance of the narrating voice in conjunction with the placement and independence allowed the central female character. Caddy, like Addie Bundren and Emily Grierson, endures the weight of societal oppression just because of her sex. To mold Caddy to a statue would be to deprive her of her individuality and

essence, both necessary steps if men are to fully possess and control the female sexuality that threatens them. Caddy resists domination but still suffers under its force.

"A Rose for Emily"

Miss Emily, in Faulkner's story, "A Rose for Emily," suffers like Caddy under the force of dominant male influence throughout her life. William Faulkner utilizes metaphors of art to demonstrate the confinement that Miss Emily experienced in her town and to advocate for her to have a more liberated societal position. I argue that Faulkner supports the feminist cause, although he often casts his opinions and reformative solutions in metaphor. Faulkner uses these metaphors to achieve a dual, yet connected, purpose. The first part of that purpose elaborates on Faulkner's idea about art and the emphasis the artistic concepts put on Miss Emily's position within her patriarchal society. One idea pertinent to the purpose is related to Faulkner's understanding of the artist's appropriation and manipulation of material. Faulkner then applies this understanding of appropriation to Miss Emily; by casting Miss Emily as different pieces of art, the townspeople establish and retain their control over her. The second part of the purpose presents Miss Emily as the fulfillment of, and simultaneous challenge to, her culture's stereotypes and expectations related to women. Both dimensions comment on the portrayal of Miss Emily and the society in which she is developed; they each voice specific concerns regarding the facades imposed upon women in the American South.

Throughout the story, Faulkner employs several art metaphors, each depicting a facet of Miss Emily constructed by her society. It is important to note that the entire story is told through the voice of the collective narrator, the voice of the townspeople, and,

appropriately, that voice has strong masculine overtones. An important distinction between the texts analyzed in this project relates to the narrating voice. In "A Rose for Emily," the narrator is male and speaks for the community as a whole, unlike the novels in which different characters take turns narrating. This difference in voice also speaks to the autonomy of the characters, allowing the speakers more authority than those who are merely spoken of.

The community voice, society, sees Miss Emily through a lens of art, and that lens represents the cage in which Miss Emily is confined because art is not capable of creation; instead, art is completely subject to the will and intention of its artist and audience. Miss Emily's society views her as an artistic creation, not an artist or a creator, and therefore, the community feels no qualms about imposing all of their history, traditions, beliefs, and social conventions upon her without considering her desire, or lack thereof, to meet their expectations. Early in the story, the town clearly describes the way in which they perceive Miss Emily: "Alive Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town," (Faulkner 74). The townspeople see her as a "tableau," an "idol," and an "angel" in a stained glass church window (Faulkner 76, 77). All of the art metaphors they create for Miss Emily fulfill that initial description, each relating directly to the sense of duty and obligation.

The clearest example of the townspeople's conceptualization of Miss Emily as art is the way in which they describe her with her father in the setting of the tableau. A tableau is commonly thought of as a picture, but it can also be the posing of a picture, such as a portrait. The following describes what is imagined as a family portrait from the perspective of the townspeople:

> We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in
> the background, her father as a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to
> her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front
> door. (77)

Like any portrait or painting, the subject is forever objectified and immortalized in one attitude. The people of the town had defined the role Miss Emily was allowed to fill and they grew antagonistic when she tried to defy it. Her role, as pictured in the description of the tableau, is one of traditional Southern femininity. She is meekly posed behind her male authority, clad in virginal white, under the manipulating violence of her father's intimidating figure and horsewhip. The posing of the tableau communicates the nuances of how Miss Emily's posture is crafted by the male authority and exhibits a "[p]aternalist ideology [that] works to create a social world and individual subjects that fulfill the paternalist's psychic needs. Thus, masculine fantasies can be said to become projected outward onto social reality" (Railey 89). The masculine fantasies seen through the tableau are those of ultimate authority and domination through direction of women's bodies and wills. Miss Emily's father fulfills a natural authoritative role but simultaneously represents the male role for his society and demonstrates the societal male desire by posing his daughter in the submissive posture in which she is framed and remembered. The tableau suppresses the independence and voice of Miss Emily, while also commenting on her sexuality through the white dress and posture of submission beneath her father. The white dress, symbolic of virginity, typifies Miss Emily into the role her father and the collective male-dominated society ordained for her as a young, unmarried woman. The white dress, coupled with her submissive posture beneath her

father, illustrates both physically and metaphorically the complete negation of Miss

Emily's sexuality and independence.

Diane Roberts elaborates on Railey's idea when she characterizes the Southern

Belle:

> The Southern Belle, heiress of the Confederate Woman, survived the Civil War
>
> and Reconstruction and was carried on into the modern world like an icon held
>
> before a ragged army. She is the heroine of the white South's most cherished
>
> story about itself: its designated work of art, bearer of its ideals. The body of the
>
> Belle was inscribed with the integrity and glamour of the South itself. (102)

By the end of the story, Miss Emily is no longer viewed as the fresh and glowing

Southern Belle, but has instead morphed into another minimized figure in Southern

society, the spinster. However, the Belle image is foisted upon her in the tableau, and all

of the expectations that came with it were hers to bear in her younger years. As she ages,

Miss Emily bears the lifelong burden of the Belle and also upholds the added burden of

the spinster. The spinster was expected to contribute positively to society, demurely

bearing her burden of solidarity and expectation of community service. But there is more

to analyze than the tableau itself; this ideology that drove Miss Emily's society is

evidenced in her other artistic depictions as well.

The first mention of art in the story is the description of the architecture of Miss

Emily's home: "It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated

with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the

seventies, set on what had once been our most select street" (73). The home is elaborate

but no longer considered to be in style and is, therefore, marginalized in the minds of the townspeople, similar to the way in which they marginalize Miss Emily. Margie Burns says, "Obviously, the old house is identified with Miss Emily (and perhaps with femaleness in general), the phrases 'heavily lightsome' and 'coquettish decay,' among others, anthropomorphize it, turning it into an old 'eyesore' like Emily herself and suggesting a threatening, veiled sexuality in both edifices" (187). Miss Emily's sexuality is threatening to the townspeople, as was all female sexuality, because, according to the male imagination, it provided women with power over men and power exclusive of any male influence. Her sexuality is revealed in subtle ways through each individual artistic depiction and correlating suppression. The house, in symbolizing Miss Emily, speaks to the girlhood never fully expressed in a sexual manner. Thus, the "coquettish" and "lightsome" charms associated with her youth will die along with her because they are never realized in outlets that society considers appropriate. The correlation the townspeople make between Miss Emily and her house aids in cementing their notion of Miss Emily as the untainted maiden-lady. Faulkner continues to craft the townspeople's descriptions of Miss Emily in an intentional way that reveals more than they perhaps intend.

Another art metaphor used to symbolize Miss Emily, one that reveals more than intended, is that of the idol: "As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily was in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol" (Faulkner 76). There are two significant layers to this representation, and both serve to entrench Miss Emily more deeply within her society's masculine creation of her role. The first layer relates to why the men are at her house to

see her in the window in the first place; they are there to attempt to eradicate secretly the horrible smell her house had begun to exude. By the end of the story, the reader learns the actual source of the smell is Homer Barron's corpse, but I believe Faulkner meant this dilemma of stench, and its consequent investigative scene, to be more telling than that: "Her house, once the grandest in town, develops a terrible smell, a sort of advertisement that she has 'fallen' […]" (Roberts 159). Faulkner uses the "mark" of scent to indicate the fall from purity, and the stench develops around Miss Emily's home at a chronologically appropriate time to mark her "fall" (Roberts). Thus, we can assume that the correlation between the scent and the fall established by Faulkner in other works applies to Miss Emily as well. In this way, the marginalization of women as related to sexuality is furthered, as Roberts explains:

> The debate [between the free play of sexuality and the social discourse demanding the containment of the female body] is played out in *Flags in the Dust* and *The Sound and the Fury*, where Narcissa Benbow and Caroline Compson speak for tradition: either you are a lady or you are not. Those who have fallen from purity have it written on them, a scarlet mark, or an odor: Narcissa says Belle Mitchell smells 'dirty,' and when Caddy is no longer a virgin, she ceases to 'smell like trees' […]. (109)

Therefore, the smell coming from Miss Emily's home would have been an indicator to the town, the reader, and especially to the men who seek to stifle her sexuality that their plan is awry. The deviance from their plan needs to be corrected as soon as possible, hence the secretive mission to obliterate the smell. The smell contradicts the image of

Miss Emily as idol, thus tarnishing the moral and ideal spinster posture outside of which the men of the town refuse to allow Miss Emily to live.

The second layer of the men representing Miss Emily as an "idol" recalls the controlling elements visible in the tableau. The image of an idol relates to religion and recalls the idea of Miss Emily as "a tradition, a duty and a care[,]" with a specific focus on the elements of tradition and duty (74). As Theweleit explains, the idol also means that Miss Emily could be for the men:

> [T]he safe woman; clothed in her white uniform or dress, almost it seems, already in her sepulchre, this woman inspires men to leave her to perform great deeds for her benefit – or so the men say. This woman is glorified and deified, always in absentia; her image looms significantly, her body ignored completely. (as qtd. in Railey 90)

The idea of Miss Emily as safe, deified, and perhaps even dead connects to the conceptualization of femininity Faulkner is revealing the men of possessing. For the men to perceive Miss Emily as either holy or dead allows them to continue perpetuating the social strictures they have developed because she is then rendered helpless and powerless beneath them. Kevin Railey takes this examination a step further:

> A key aspect of this definition of masculinity is the objectification of women. [He] objectifies women into ladies for whom he can fight the good fight, denying their sexual presence, praising them as if they were statues, goddesses – ladies on the pedestal. (87)

The men envision Miss Emily fulfilling the expectations they create for her by casting her as an idol, and in doing so, they validate the roles they have assigned to themselves of protector and provider. Also, by placing Miss Emily on such a pedestal, they do not have to accept the implications of acknowledging her humanity and subsequent sexuality.[2] The men relegate Miss Emily to the realm of a relic and, thereby, justify and validate themselves and their societal constructions. The ideas of Miss Emily as belle, spinster, or idol all rely upon the societal willingness to accept such strictures without exceptions or more flexible definitions. Faulkner is accusing his own society of being guilty of making such unexamined judgments. Caroline Matheny Dillman illuminates this generalized Southern condition:

> Southern women are tied to men for validation. If male dominance is threatened when women move into the public world because of changes in the social order, these men try to reinforce their wives' traditional gender-role beliefs in an effort to reassert dominance over them. (16)

While Miss Emily is not dealing with the domination of a husband, she instead grapples with the domination of an entire community, making Dillman's words all the more relevant. While Faulkner is not gentle with his criticisms, he also suggests the path to change after the revelation of the error.

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[2] Late in my research I came across a reference to Gordon, a character from *Mosquitoes* who also happens to be a sculptor. Many critics suggest that Faulkner is representing himself as an artist through Gordon, thereby making Gordon's sculpture of an "armless, legless, and headless torso" that he treasures as "[his] feminine ideal, […] a virgin with no legs to leave me, no arms to hold me, no head to talk to me" (as qtd. in Singal 89-90) all the more indicative of Faulkner's reflections and critique. This scene, even if not correlated with Faulkner himself, positions my argument within a wider context in Faulkner's work and I plan to add an analysis of its relevance and implications as I continue to develop this project in the future.

The art metaphor of Miss Emily as an angel in a church window deepens the townspeople's commitments to their strictures and tightens the reins around Miss Emily's femininity even more. Faulkner writes: "She was sick for a long time. When we saw her again, he hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows – sort of tragic and serene" (Faulkner 77). This comparison relates back to the "care" and "tradition" description of Miss Emily from the beginning of the story. The townspeople picture her as a stained-glass window, a fixture in a part of their history and traditions. As a "tragic and serene" angel, the townspeople cast her as a representative of the possibility of overcoming hardship, through the façade of belle and spinster that she presents. In the mind of her society, Miss Emily is an angel she is representative of angelic qualities such as purity, strength, and joy. In order for it to be true that Miss Emily is the embodiment of those qualities, she must have overcome the trials her life presents. Often, those trials are lived out in a very public manner, such as the dominance and strictness of Miss Emily's father resulting in her spinsterhood and reserved manner. The metaphor of the angel relates back to the deification of women I discussed through the idolization of Miss Emily. It is reassuring for the men to place Miss Emily, and all other women, especially the unmarried ones, into figures that lack sexuality and authority. The angel also possesses the all-important element of purity: "[like] a blank page, the Confederate Woman is an unfilled space, 'pure' so that the ideology of the plantation South may be inscribed on her [...]" (Roberts 2). The men already demonstrated the high value they place on purity by the covert mission to eradicate the smell Miss Emily's house exuded and by their portrayal of her through the traditional and acceptable illustration of the tableau.

Faulkner had his own influential experiences with Confederate women; during a question-and-answer session, a student asked Faulkner if he remembered talking to Confederate veterans as a boy and hearing their war stories. Faulkner replied:

> Yes. I remember a lot of them. I was five-six-seven years old […], old enough to understand, to listen. They didn't talk so much about the war, I had got that from the maiden spinster aunts which had never surrendered. […] (*Faulkner in the University* 249)

I find it valuable to examine how Faulkner's childhood recollections of unvanquished aunts must have informed his writing of Miss Emily Grierson. Like Faulkner's aunts, Miss Emily was that contradictory maiden-spinster, caught in the liminal asexual position allowed her. She, too, clung to the past, although she, for more symbolic reasons than perhaps Faulkner's aunts, as already discussed in her representation as a relic. However, in Miss Emily, the perseverance Faulkner assigns to his aunts can also be seen in her subversion of the role into which her community forced her; she operates within the system but covertly, as revealed through the murder of Homer Barron. By portraying Miss Emily as dangerous, Faulkner elevates her authority and asserts her autonomy in a way not previously done in the story. As Jesse Nash says, "When the culture acknowledges that women are potentially dangerous, it recognizes their real and potential power; dangerous women, as one young woman told me, are women men have to respect" (19-20). Miss Emily is never able to enjoy the benefits gained as a result of her community's newfound respect for her but she possibly paves the way for the change Faulkner desired to see in the Southern community.

Community and Religion in Faulkner's South

Related to each of the ideas I have addressed so far is the idea of woman as a relic, another community creation crafted to serve its own purposes. The concept of the relic is most evident and important within "A Rose for Emily." As dreadful a murderer the community would have readers believe Miss Emily to be, it is impossible to imagine that she is ever exposed to a positive example of how to live or participate in healthy relationships when Faulkner clearly demonstrates the restrictions within which both her father and her community forces her to function within. In pursuing Homer Barron, Miss Emily takes the only course of action she had ever witnessed. That is, she does whatever is required to possess him completely. Perhaps the community thinks Miss Emily would be the key to their own healing, that she would be the patch between the past and the frightening future, preserving the way of life for which each member had been indoctrinated to fight. However, if indeed they had formulated such a plan, it goes awry when Miss Emily becomes a person with desires and a will of her own, acting without permission. "A Rose for Emily" demonstrates the subjugation that women living in the post-Confederate South dealt with daily, and while it does not offer a viable plan for change, it insists upon reevaluation of the status quo.

Faulkner makes it clear that he understands the way a Southern town functions and, therefore, earns the credibility needed to be critical by emphasizing the importance and influence of the community. The community in Faulkner's novels provides characters with common interests and acquaintances and also serves as a moral compass through which all community members' actions are judged. Cleanth Brooks recognizes the element of community in Faulkner's work and elaborates on its significance:

[Readers] may well be aware of its limitations and of its occasionally cruel constraints, but they recognize that the los of cultural cohesion is a genuine loss, all the more so in a world suffering from alienation and atomization. Was Faulkner himself aware of this cultural cohesion? [...] Does it ever clearly surface in Faulkner's work? Yes, it does. Let me offer a few obvious instances. The nameless narrator of 'A Rose for Emily' never says 'I thought this' or 'I believed that.' Throughout the story he uses phrases such as 'Our whole town went to her funeral'; 'We had long thought'; 'We were not pleased exactly, but vindicated' [...] I could continue, but surely it is evident that the man who tells the story of Miss Emily is consciously speaking for the community, and his story is finally about what Miss Emily's life and death meant to the community. (Brooks 31-32)

Brooks's position that Faulkner's ultimate goal was to show the impact of Miss Emily's "life and death" on the community is different from my own, although the role of the community in the story of Miss Emily's life is a significant one in both of our interpretations. Faulkner's self-proclaimed goal was never to paint broad, sweeping portraits of entire towns but to focus on the people with whom he found himself fascinated. When questioned about the possibility of symbolism in "A Rose for Emily," Faulkner replied:

That would only be incidental. I think that the writer is too busy trying to create flesh-and-blood people that will stand up and cast a shadow to have time to be conscious of all the symbolism that he may put into what he does or what people may read into it. (*Faulkner in the University* 47)

Faulkner's response allows for all the different readings he may have laced throughout his story, while also establishing a necessary distance between himself and his work, owning it, but not directing it.

However, Brooks also effectively argues that it is Miss Emily's isolation from the community that pushes her over into madness. The desire to live in community is part of the human condition and Faulkner is capitalizing on this desire by revealing potential consequences of such desires being squelched. Miss Emily is relegated to the borders of her community, first due to the presence of her overbearing father and later due to her status as a spinster. Her community does not make room for her and she has not been trained or encouraged to develop the tenacity to make a spot for herself. Brooks says:

> […] Miss Emily's absolute defiance of what others think, and her insistence on meeting life solely on her own terms, ignoring custom, tradition, and law, can end in a horrifying deformation of her own psyche. The community learns *how* horrifying only after Miss Emily's death when the door of an upstairs bedroom is forced and the intruders discover what is left of the body of her lover of forty years before. A refusal to knuckle under to the forms and actions expected by the community need not, of course, be disastrous. But complete isolation from the community can lead to madness and murder. (40-41)

However, as Brooks continues to say, such an example is not meant merely to offer a clinical analysis of Miss Emily's mental health but to connect Miss Emily's life with her community's complex reactions to her resulting in a "parable"-like story reflective of the Southern condition (40-41). This purpose aligns with my suggestion that Faulkner is

accurately portraying a Southern woman's struggle to thrive in a Southern community based on tradition and inherited prejudices in order to bring about change. Faulkner himself said the story was "[…] another sad and tragic manifestation of man's condition in which he dreams and hopes, in which he is in conflict with himself or with his environment or with others" (*Faulkner in the University* 184). By terming the story a "tragic manifestation," Faulkner acknowledges the damage a Southern community can intentionally, or unintentionally, render to an individual. However, it is also fair to add that Faulkner also claimed he did not seek to satirize the South because he loved it, saying, "[…] it has its faults and I will try to correct them, but I will not try to correct them when I am writing a story, because I'm talking about people then" (*Faulkner in the University* 83). However, I would argue the strongest criticisms are formed through the portrayals of people. Without a personal life, face, and name in which to invest a reader, all criticisms will fall flat. But a character as dimensional as Miss Emily will not fail to inspire devotion and change because of readers' sympathy and attachment to her. Therefore, Faulkner did, indeed, reveal the faults of his beloved land while concomitantly inspiring the motivation to correct the faults and improve it. If Faulkner had written an essay about the marginalization of women in the South, I would argue that its audience and response would be much smaller and more lackluster.

Faulkner also evidences this kind of specificity by the inclusion of the community element present in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*. Both families in the novels are highly aware of the community's perception of them and concerned with not tarnishing their reputations. Such a concern, while universal in nature, takes on a particular personality in the South, greatly affecting comportment in any type of public

setting. It is this preoccupation with public opinion that aids in informing parental expectations and disappointments.

In *The Sound and the Fury,* Caddy's brothers are embarrassed with her apparent promiscuity and seek to suppress her. In *As I Lay Dying,* the entire family is aware of their community's opinions about them as they honor Addie's wishes to be buried in her hometown, not the one in which the family currently resides. The community speaks disparagingly of the Bundrens not only because of the manner in which they treat Addie's death and funeral preparations but also in the way in which their children act, particularly Dewey Dell. There is much emphasis put on the expectation of Dewey Dell's non-sexuality just like in Faulkner's other texts, she is valued only when she is not a threat to men.

The opinion of the community also comes into play in the texts, particularly "A Rose for Emily" in a religious context. It is the pervasive Protestantism of the South that resonates through the texts, directing the aforementioned moral compass by which characters judge and are judged and also contributing to cultural events like Easter Sunday in *The Sound and the Fury.* Religion in Faulkner's work is an expansive topic that I will not claim to exhaust in this paper, but instead I will address it as it specifically relates to the development and lives of the women on whom I focus.

There are instances in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury* that could relate to the conflict between the dominantly Protestant South and Catholicism. However, this idea of the relic is best discussed along with "A Rose for Emily" and cannot be completely understood outside of the artistic context within which the story is formed.

The idea of the relic first surfaces in reference to "A Rose for Emily" in which the hair upon the pillowcase is what remains of the community's idea of Miss Emily and the idea is cemented with the discovery of Homer Barron's decomposed body – quite literally pictured as being held in the same way a community would keep the body of a saint[3]. This posthumous preservation, executed by Miss Emily, further privileges the masculine over the feminine as Miss Emily operates, albeit covertly, within the parameters of a patriarchal system and keeps the body of her male lover as a relic with what is assumed to be fervent devotion.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church defines relic by saying, "In Christian usage the word is applied most commonly to the material remains of a saint after his death, as well as to sacred objects that have been in contact with his body […]" (1379). The Oxford Dictionary then goes on to reference the association of miracles and healing (1379). Miss Emily's community then casts her as a relic – one of the last remaining from her generation, representative of all gentility and cherished tradition to which the Southern community desperately clung. In making her a relic, Miss Emily's community allows her to be a singularly faceted person; she exists only to validate her community's need, just as typical relics exist only to serve and reassure the religious people clinging to them, not the saint with whom they are associated. In turn, Miss Emily does the same thing to Homer Barron, very literally taking his physical being as a relic to serve as fulfillment for her need for companionship. The community, by defining Miss Emily as both an idol and a relic, reveal their own ideas and even insecurities concerning religion. At the same time, Miss Emily, unbeknownst to the community, perpetuates its

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[3] I am indebted to Kristin Taylor and our many conversations for this idea.

male-dominated system while subverting it through the creation of her own relic. As David Halle, in a study of the placement and importance of art in American homes, comments concerning religious iconography in the home:

> The idea that the audience for religious iconography passively absorbs the messages of religious propaganda that are somehow attached to the objects is scarcely borne out by the data. On the contrary, the relation between audience and religious iconography is strikingly similar to that found already to exist in this study between audiences and other 'artistic' genres. In general, the audience selects (consciously or not) those images, and attributes to them those meanings that resonate with their current lives and beliefs, especially as these relate to house, neighborhood, and domestic social relations. (191)

It is plain, through the perspective offered through Halle's study, to see the motivation of the townspeople to classify Miss Emily in such convenient roles for them, substantiating their own paradigms of "social relations" (191). At the end of the story, the community is shocked to find the very literal relic of Miss Emily's hair along with Homer Barron's decomposed body. Their shock comes not only from the gruesomeness of the scene but also from the betrayal they feel upon discovering that Miss Emily has defied the role they assigned her, living outside of their allotted space, their idea of appropriate society.

Another part of living outside of accepted society in the post-Confederate South would be to practice Catholicism. The allusions to relics in "A Rose for Emily" begin our examination of Faulkner's observations of how Catholics were treated in his land. Daryl White and O. Kendall White Jr. examine the state of religion in the South and

acknowledge that "[n]o region in the country […] was more dominated by nor more defined in terms of religion," and that religion was unquestionably Protestant (2). Samuel S. Hill also comments on this phenomenon of Southern culture saying, "no single feature of the southern religious picture is more revealing than the absence of pluralism and diversity from the popular denominations" (xvii). The practice of any religion outside of mainstream Protestantism, specifically Catholicism, contributed to a conflict between the competing heritage of each institution, both Catholicism and Protestantism, which is proudly displayed and considered inherent through their daily manifestations. The difference between these two heritages is obvious in many ways, but for the casual observer, the exterior of their buildings, as aptly described by Jon W. Anderson and Gwen Kennedy Neville, is enough to distinguish between them:

> Catholic churches throughout the South stand spatially and stylistically apart from mainstream Protestant one. Their common red-brick-and-plaster gothic style stands apart not just from the neoclassical 'colonial' styles favored by Protestant churches; it stands in a period of renewed counterreformation in the nineteenth century that obliterated previous styles and was itself supplanted by more ecumenical, 'modern' styles […] (24)

I find this passage to be significantly parallel to the description of Miss Emily's house in the story, and its architecture communicative of meaning similar to that of the Catholic churches in the South. Both Miss Emily and Catholics are housed in buildings that reveal through their facades just how much they are not part of the mainstream society, making it all the easier for their respective communities to pinpoint their difference and penalize them for it. I do not think an affiliation between Miss Emily and Catholicism is necessary

for Faulkner to communicate the whole of his message related to marginalization, but it can only serve to bolster his points about Southern judgment and adherence to tradition above all else.

As I Lay Dying has many religious references mostly to God as provider and overseer that are used in a culturally religious way, rather than a personally spiritual one. Typically, Southern heritage dictates at least a conversational knowledge of Protestantism; people often participate in church events from a sense of duty and community rather than any individual spiritual desire or exploration. Faulkner taps into these understood falsities of cultural spirituality, though these references would resound not only with a Southern audience but with Faulkner himself, whose spirituality interviewers were never able to pin down. Cleanth Brooks describes the uncertainty surrounding Faulkner's religion like this:

> [M]any of [Faulkner's] statements [about his religious beliefs] are vague or puzzling, or even contradict what is said in other passages. I think we do best therefore to look at his fiction – that is, to study the way in which his characters behave and to note his implied judgments, as author, of their actions and beliefs. After all, like that of most modern Americans, Faulkner's theological education was shaky. (123)

Therefore, adopting Brooks's suggestion, I propose to examine the presentation of Faulkner's characters as representative of, if not Faulkner's, the typical Southerner's spirituality as they present their facades of religion through a socially constructed vocabulary and understanding of religion's place in their culture. The most important

aspects of this spirituality for my purposes are first, how it affects the social construction of the women, and second, how those women then interact with and fit into their communities, always seeking more nuances of Faulkner's commentary on feminism.

Returning to *As I Lay Dying,* we can see how Anse uses the idea and excuse of God to enable his laziness and how Addie sometimes envisions God as a void into which she cast the responsibility for her misery. God affects Dewey Dell mostly in indirect ways; often, she is the one upon whom the Southern devout cast judgments. For Dewey Dell, the intersection of religion and expectations of women meld to form a very restrictive existence.

Caddy Compson's experience is very similar to Dewey Dell's as she, too, writhes beneath the dead weight of religious tradition carried out by her family and her society's expectations of her. Both girls struggle with their sexuality; Dewey Dell is deceived by a man claiming to want to help her, the scene a microcosm of the world for a poor teenage girl in Faulkner's South, with ill-intentioned men assuming positions of authority to take advantage of girls afforded no opportunity or knowledge to defeat them. Caddy, too, suffers under the dominating forces of her brothers and father. Faulkner reveals just how negative sexuality can become through Caddy's situation in which her brother, Quentin, longs for an incestuous relationship with her in order to purify her from her previous sexual liaison with a man named Dalton Ames. As Jay Parini notes, "This puritanical view of sex carries over into a distorted view of women [...]" (119). Quentin's view of Caddy as fallen is a result of the Southern acculturation Faulkner is deftly critiquing, as Quentin has misplaced desires to "repair" what has been damaged and thinks that sleeping with Caddy will "undo Caddy's loss of virtue" (119). These scenarios of

skewed sexuality and misplaced responsibility and desire are indicative of an underlying social condition Faulkner is revealing. The social condition is that of an unflinching construction of morality and virtue that must be adhered to religiously.

Modernism in Faulkner's Work

It is important to remember that Faulkner is writing from an intentionally developed Modernist aesthetic, not a purely Southern one, and consequently, it is beneficial to broaden our scope of analysis to include probable influences. There is strong evidence to suggest the artist Cézanne's powerful influence on Faulkner and, probably, the development "A Rose for Emily" itself. Faulkner's trip to Paris in 1925 is now considered a hallmark of his artistic development because of the exposure he had to new kinds of art and the fondness established for many artists whose presences are undeniable in his work. Daniel J. Singal says, "[a]rt indeed became the principal vehicle by which [Faulkner] imbibed Modernist aesthetics during his Paris stay" (73). Faulkner's connection with Cézanne adds importance to the consideration of Faulkner's artistic paradigms by aiding in the understanding of where they began and how such paradigms were shaped and then evident in Faulkner's work. Because Faulkner's trip to Paris, where he developed a proclivity for Cézanne, occurred in 1925, and "A Rose for Emily" was not published until 1930, there are many characteristics of the story that can be attributed to Faulkner's admiration of Cézanne; a "sense of curved form" and "largeness of effect, the powerful possession of space" are just two of those (Lind 142). These aesthetics can be seen in "A Rose for Emily" through Faulkner's descriptions of the architecture of the town, the specific details he highlights in the description of the interior of the Grierson home, and the physicality of each character. Another connection between the two artists

comes in their ability to "[p]ain[t] the local, but transcen[d] it" (Lind 145). Faulkner

exemplifies this quality in Emily's story and in the two novels, seemingly providing

details about a community's eccentricity but actually speaking to broader truths and

patterns of injustice to women in the post-Confederate South.

One of Cézanne's paintings, *Peasant with a Blue Blouse* (located on page 40), is

of particular interest in conjunction with "A Rose of Emily." The piece depicts the

peasant of the title filling the frame of the work, shaded vibrantly and appearing

confident in his bold portrayal. However, upon closer examination of the work, one can

notice a minimized figure behind the left shoulder of the man. She is faceless and painted

in very muted hues. She wears a dress, holds what appears to be a flower in one hand, in

the other, a dainty parasol. The busyness of her hands, both filled with articles of

femininity, conveys her inhibited independence. Her attention is directed at the man in

the front of the frame. Henri Lallemand says, "The detail shows a woman with a parasol

in her rococo elegance, which contrasts markedly with the rustic peasant simplicity"

(126). Such a contrast, while not of class or wardrobe, as in Faulkner's tableau in "A

Rose for Emily," is paralleled in the posing and personality conveyed through the image.

There are other works by Cézanne that also contribute to this idea of social

commentary and could have inspired Faulkner. One, in particular, *The Eternal Feminine*

(located on page 38), contains "an ironic commentary on the enslavement of the clergy

by Woman" (Geist 133). In this painting, the roles are reversed from Faulkner's work, as

it is the woman who is dominant; however, the principle remains the same and speaks to

Cézanne's awareness of the power of female sexuality and its manifestation in society.

Henri Lallemand describes the painting with the centralized woman surrounded by men

from all walks of life, "receiv[ing] ovations from all those […] while at the same time

remaining distanced and unapproachable" (82). This interpretation echoes the association

of the belle/spinster identity Southern society forced upon women. Faulkner could have

taken from this painting an idea of how to speak to the manifestation of his society's fear

and suppression of female sexuality, resulting in the works already discussed and the

marginalization of the women within them.

Faulkner's idea of modernism is expressed throughout each of the texts, not just

"A Rose for Emily." The novels *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury* both exhibit

elements of modernism through their construction and technical details. Panthea Reid

lists some of the methods Faulkner employed to demonstrate his aesthetic:

> [Faulkner] did use italics, section breaks, and interpolated narratives […] He
>
> created collages that call the readers' attention to the interface between word and
>
> image by literally drawing figures in the texts of *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I
>
> Lay Dying*, and *Go Down, Moses*. He illustrated the limits of language visually by
>
> leaving a blank space in the text of *As I Lay Dying*. (103-105)

While this is not an exhaustive list of the techniques with which Faulkner experimented

in order to find different ways of communicating his Modernist concerns (such as the

construction of reality, the complexity of time, and the facets of portraiture) it does give

an indication of his investment in the nuances of the writing process from a Modernist

perspective. Faulkner positioned himself firmly within Modernist discourse, parallel to

the artists he admired. However, just as the Modernist artists in whom Faulkner was

interested celebrated their localities, so does Faulkner in his exploration of the South; his

work, while Modernist is also unquestionably regional. Faulkner's artistic objectives included current art theory but also reached beyond it or, perhaps more appropriately, through it, to address his own society.

Conclusion

Faulkner reveals his society's strictures in "A Rose for Emily," *As I Lay Dying*, and *The Sound and the Fury*. Miss Emily is first subject to the authority of her father who frightened all her suitors away and then the community itself who functions in a similar capacity, denying her any sexuality or femininity beyond that which they deem appropriate. Appropriateness, as with all of Faulkner's texts examined here, is based on religion and a twist of social tradition. Readers see Miss Emily mature from young girl to old woman with no one to love and no outward manifestations of her maturity beyond the changing colors, white to black[4], of her clothing and hair. The absence of romantic relationships in Miss Emily's youth and the perversion of her romance with Homer Barron all reflect the unhealthy way of life the community demands and its potential consequences.

The patriarchal nature of the South is highlighted in the destructive way of life to which women are commanded to conform. Faulkner accomplishes the purpose he outlines for himself in these texts – to relate his own ideas about art and the creative process to an analysis of how art affects Miss Emily, Addie, and Caddy by constricting them as objects created by and belonging to men. Miss Emily presents a challenge to her society, and even though she is discussed only by the detached and cold voice of the

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[4] The colors provide visual cues to the reader that the transition Miss Emily undergoes, as envisioned by her community, is a change beyond the natural aging process from virginal Belle to mourning Spinster.

townspeople, readers can sense the sympathy Faulkner harbors for Emily and also for

Addie and Caddy in their analogous circumstances and the value change for which he

advocates. However, it is worth noting that Faulkner presents his views through

metaphors, shielding himself behind his own art. This intentional distancing perhaps

suggests that he recognizes the presence of the culturally engrained beliefs he is

criticizing within himself, as a Southern man.

The system present in each of the works discussed is one that employs the

archetype of belle/spinster. All of the male authorities in the pieces believe the women

for whom they are responsible must maintain their purity at all costs or be ostracized and

condemned for their sins. *As I Lay Dying* ends before Dewey Dell's secret pregnancy is

exposed, leaving the reader to speculate on her future. Caddy, in *The Sound and the Fury,*

goes through painful romances as a result of her family's lack of guidance and also their

extreme disapproval and shunning of her. Miss Emily, in "A Rose for Emily," flouts

convention and yet keeps her deviation secret, protecting herself from the inevitable

punishment of her community and, thereby, creating her own private torment. In each

work, the communal hand of morality and conformity directs the women's experiences,

and that hand is distinctly male.

Returning to the concept of Faulkner shielding himself behind his intricately

constructed metaphors, we must explore two possibilities for this effect. The first

possibility is that Faulkner was maximizing the Modernist practice of layering. Faulkner,

as author, is directing the depiction of his female characters on the page, choosing to cast

them in metaphor and, thereby, removing them one layer from the reader. This is

significant because it doubles the layered effect readers perceive from the text – the first

layer being crafted by the women's societies in the texts and the second layer being crafted by the author as he chooses to present their plights in this detached manner. This creates a complex sense of time, reality, and art in true Modernist fashion. It also hearkens back to our discussion of ekphrasis, and Susan V. Donaldson elaborates on this possibility when she says:

> In the highly engendered inflections of male modernist art [young Faulkner] found the means for reinscribing the boundaries between masculinity and femininity that appeared so blurred in the modern world, and in Keats, oddly enough, he also found the means for appropriating art from the domain of 'polite painting by gentlewomen' [Faulkner]. Indeed, Faulkner's description of his discovery of Keats reveals not just his delight in a spiritually attuned precursor but palpable relief that art – and perhaps china painting in particular – could be retrieved from the encroaching presence of the feminine. (70)

It would be irresponsible to assign Faulkner a position removed from personal conflict and insecurity and I feel that Donaldson does a good job of summarizing Faulkner's attraction to ekphrasis and its ramifications for both his position as author and his readers as interpreters.

The second possibility is that Faulkner used metaphor so extensively in order to distance himself from both the women he crafted and the societal hand under which they suffered. Cézanne, already established as one of Faulkner's artistic influences, straddled the worlds between Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, and this is clearly reflected in the pieces he produced. Similarly, Faulkner, as his parallel, also straddled two worlds –

one in which male dominance was the unquestioned standard and another in which female marginalization was producing growing discomfort and agitation. However, the most likely reality is that Faulkner worked from within a combination of these two possibilities. These societal and personal conflicts, evidenced in and addressed through art, contribute to the richness of Faulkner's legacy. Faulkner, living as a Southern man with the cultural insecurities that were foisted upon him in the same way undesired expectations were foisted upon his female characters, expressed his insecurities and fears through his art and, through the frustration, demonstrated the urgent need for change. Faulkner depicted his society's restrictive holds on women, utilizing his characters' subsequent pain and experiences as a catalyst for consequential discussions of reformation that anticipated the feminist movement.

Peasant in a Blue Blouse, Paul Cézanne

The Eternal Feminine, Paul Cézanne

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